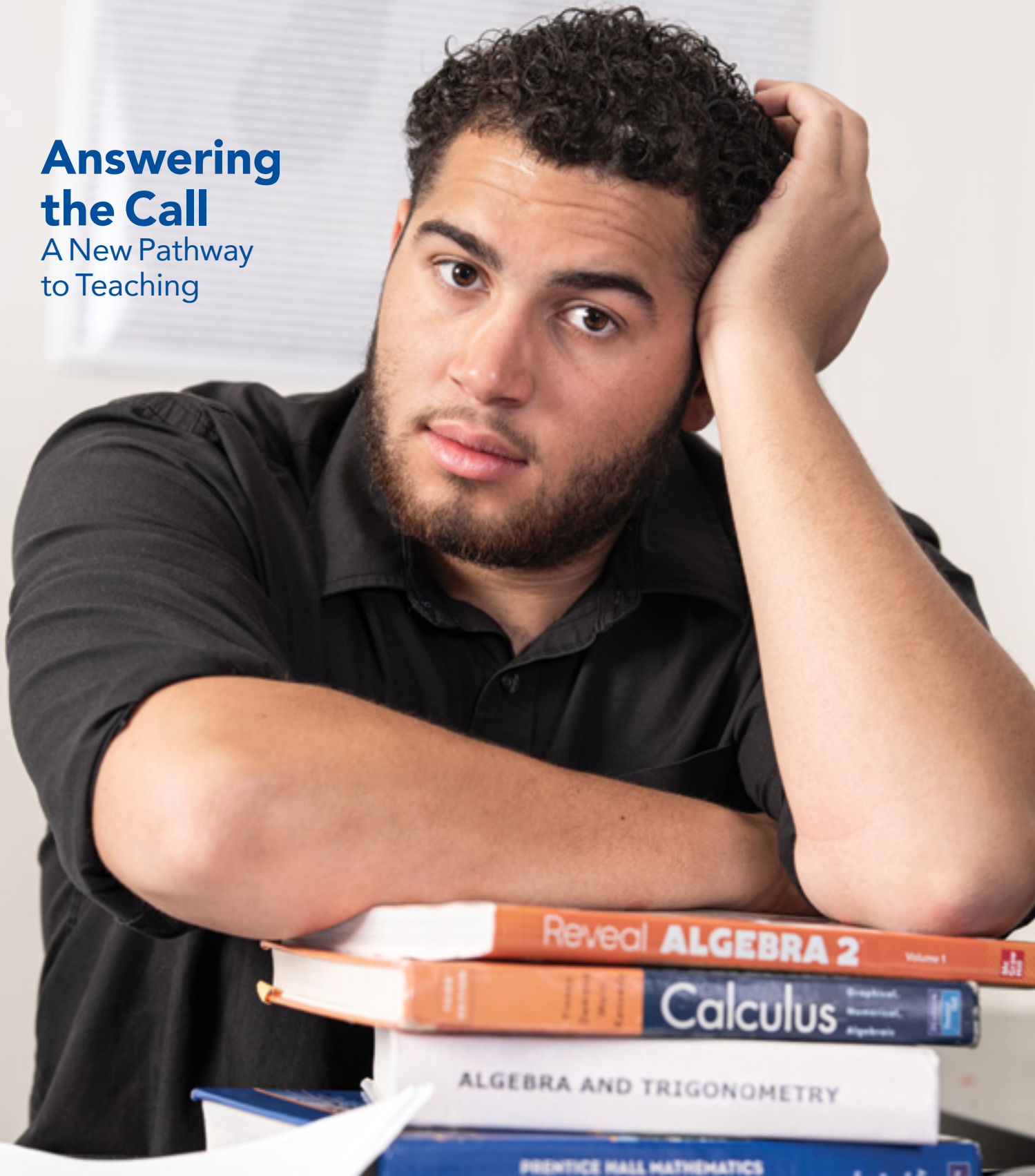


# PittEd

University of Pittsburgh School of Education Fall 2022

## Answering the Call

A New Pathway  
to Teaching



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# PittEd

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Greg Latshaw

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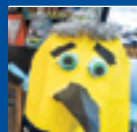
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### On the Cover:

Pitt student Javon Key is interested in enrolling in the School of Education's undergraduate program that creates new ways to become teachers. See cover story on page 10.



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## Lessons from My Teachers

I am a proud graduate of the Charleston, South Carolina, preK-12 public schools. From elementary to middle and high school, I had so many inspiring teachers who I still fondly remember today. They made me feel important, smart, welcomed, seen, heard, and loved. In fact, they encouraged me to always express my creative ideas and to fully lean into learning in community with others. There was never a question that my teachers wanted what was best for my peers and me: They co-created high expectations for us, motivated us to name and meet our goals, and cheered us on during both joyous and challenging times.

The various lessons modeled by and learned from my teachers have shaped who I am today. As an educator, a researcher, a leader in higher education, and the daughter of working-class parents in the South, I rely on the wisdom from my familial community (which includes my teachers) to ensure that I commit to equity and justice in education. This necessarily requires that I always seek to create humanizing spaces with and for others, that I understand my responsibility to and in justice-directed work, and that I listen intently and intentionally to what others say they need and want. From my work as dean to my role as president of the National Council of Teachers of English, I am, to use the words of poet June Millicent Jordan, “directed by desire” to leave the world better than I found it.

This work and this humanizing approach permeate the teacher education programs in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. Our commitment to equitable teaching practices is evident in the school’s mission-vision, which, among other things, asks that we “teach with and for dignity,” “lead with integrity,” “dream,” and “work for justice.” Indeed, our country is facing a



moment in which high-quality teachers are needed more than ever—within contexts and under conditions that truly value and respect their work, expertise, and humanity. There is a dire need for more teachers both within the state of Pennsylvania and across the nation, and the need for more Teachers of Color is especially high. Education research shows that both Students of Color and white students do well academically and emotionally when they have at least one Teacher of Color during their educational journeys. Thus, schools and colleges of education have a particular responsibility to contribute to meeting this need.

This edition of PittEd magazine focuses on the next major development in our school’s teacher education programs: the forthcoming launch of our new Bachelor of Science in teacher education. The program will build on our legacy of graduate-level teacher education while providing a new pathway to an undergraduate degree and certification. It arrives at a time when more talented, equity-minded, and critically insightful teachers are much needed.

My hope is that our new undergraduate degree program will revolutionize the future of teaching and teacher education regionally, nationally, and globally. I also am hopeful that our program will not only meet the needs of prospective teachers but also lead to transforming public perceptions about teachers, teaching, schools, and communities. Thanks to our dedicated faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends, and school district and community partners, I believe we are well on our way to leading this educational transformation.

Together, we can ensure that teacher training in our school inspires, motivates, and prepares impactful educators who care, who dream, and who dare to teach and lead for justice. I, for one, know that this is the work we need to do because my teachers instilled this belief in me, and we must instill it in others.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Valerie Kinloch".

Valerie Kinloch, PhD  
Renée and Richard Goldman Dean  
University of Pittsburgh School of  
Education



## Where the Puppets Are

Written by Kaitlyn Zurcher

**O**f all the after-school programs available to students at the University of Pittsburgh's Fanny Edel Falk Laboratory School, the Giant Puppet Dance Club might be the most unexpected.

But, as visual arts teacher Cheryl Capezzuti notes, middle schoolers are drawn to the larger-than-life club that introduces them to the magic of puppetry.

"When you put yourself in a giant puppet, you can dance around and nobody knows who you are," says Capezzuti. "A lot of the kids say that's really freeing."

Falk students in the Giant Puppet Dance Club meet weekly to learn choreographed dances while wearing giant puppets—whimsical, brightly colored, full-body puppets that extend a few feet above students' heads. The club then performs at school and community events.

Beyond the visual and performing arts skills that students develop, Capezzuti says that they also learn valuable lessons in collaboration and giving to others.

"You learn a lot about yourself when you perform for others and help them find joy in the world," she says.

In 2021, Capezzuti received a \$3,000 grant from the Jane Henson Foundation for her creative puppetry work

at the Falk School. Heather Henson, daughter of Muppets creator Jim Henson, awarded the grant to Capezzuti after seeing her presentation on puppetry in education at the 2019 Puppeteers of America conference.

The Giant Puppet Dance Club will use the grant funding to create new puppets, produce new music tracks, and cover the transportation costs for students to perform at events in underserved communities.





## Where Progress Is Always in Progress

**E**ffective fall 2022, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education will offer new degree and certificate programs in two academic disciplines.

### Education Policy

Pitt Education is offering new Master of Arts (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs in education policy. Focused on equity-driven education policy work, the programs will study the systems, policies, frameworks, methods, and engagements that will contribute to a more just and equitable society and improve learning outcomes for all students.

To allow students to specialize in specific areas of policy, the MA program (36 credits) has optional concentrations in higher education policy and in comparative and international education. The PhD program (90 credits) offers an optional concentration in comparative and international education.

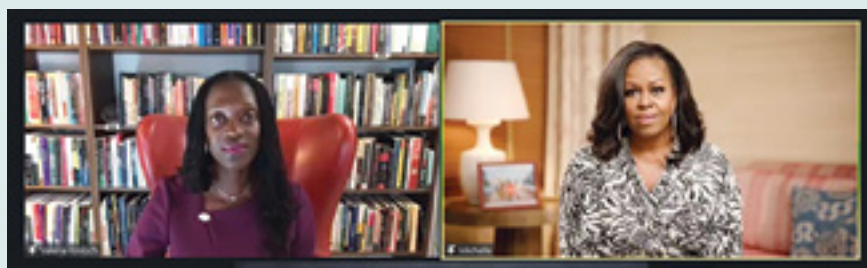


### Critical Technology and Digital Media for Learning

Pitt Education is offering an online certificate program in critical technology and digital media for learning. The 12-credit program builds knowledge in equitable design, digital literacy and agency, and critical thinking within various educational contexts. The program is designed for educators, instructional designers, administrators, and school technology directors.

The certificate program is offered online in a fully

asynchronous format. Students who complete the program have the option of applying all 12 credits toward the school's 30-credit Master of Education program in curriculum and instruction.



### A Presidential Moment

**O**n Nov. 18, 2021, in her role as incoming president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), University of Pittsburgh School of Education Renée and Richard Goldman Dean Valerie Kinloch moderated the opening general session with former First Lady Michelle Obama. The hour-long talk, which took place virtually because of the pandemic, was part of NCTE's 2021 convention, which had the theme (selected by Kinloch) of Equity, Justice, and Antiracist Teaching. Obama was invited to discuss her memoir, "Becoming." With Kinloch asking questions and sharing her own observations, the conversation



touched on many topics. Obama spoke about the impact her favorite teachers had on her growth and development as a young girl, the importance of knowing and understanding the stories of others in terms of our shared humanity, and the inherent power and brilliance of Black youths in America. Additionally, Obama addressed how the work of change can sometimes be long and slow and even take several generations. Before the conversation was over, Kinloch and Obama were calling each other by their first names. It was an experience that Kinloch—and the thousands who tuned in for the broadcast—won't soon forget.



## Honor Roll

The following are among the recent awards and honors presented to Pitt Education faculty members.



**Gina Garcia**, associate professor, received the University of Pittsburgh 2021 Creating a Just Community Award in recognition of her work in creating welcoming spaces for Latinx students, faculty, and staff at Pitt and her scholarship related to Hispanic-serving institutions. Garcia also received a 2022 Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award in the Junior Scholar category.



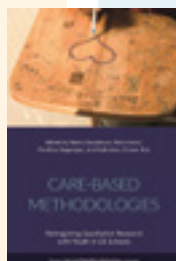
**Darris Means**, associate professor, received a 2021 Richard P. Nathan Policy Fellowship from the Rockefeller Institute of Government. He will conduct state policy-focused research related to rural education and equity.



**Leigh Patel**, professor, was elected to the National Academy of Education, an honorary society of scholars who make outstanding contributions to the education field.



**Shannon Wanless**, associate professor, received a 2022 Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award for her work as director of the Office of Child Development.



## Fall Reads

Pitt Education faculty members have recently released new books touching on a range of educational topics.

### "Care-based Methodologies: Reimagining Qualitative Research with Youth in U.S. Schools"

Edited by Veena Vasudevan\*, Nora Gross, Pavithra Nagarajan, and Katherine Clonan-Roy

Details methods for conducting responsible research that improves the understanding of youths' lives, cares for their well-being, and works toward dismantling the systems that oppress them



### "The Foundational Handbook on Improvement Research in Education"

Edited by Donald J. Peurach, Jennifer Lin Russell\*, Lora Cohen-Vogel, and William R. Penuel

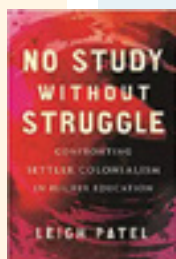
Builds a field of research committed to producing the practical knowledge needed to advance educational access, quality, and equity



### "It Takes an Ecosystem: Understanding the People, Places, and Possibilities of Learning and Development Across Settings"

Edited by Thomas Akiva\* and Kimberly H. Robinson

Examines how in-school and out-of-school learning systems can be improved to better support young people's learning and development



### "No Study Without Struggle: Confronting Settler Colonialism in Higher Education"

By Leigh Patel\*

Explores how student protests can push back against structural inequalities given that higher education institutions have a legacy rooted in slavery and stolen Indigenous lands



### "Where Is the Justice? Engaged Pedagogies in Schools and Communities"

By Valerie Kinloch\*, Emily A. Nemeth, Tamara T. Butler, and Grace D. Player

Focuses on teaching and learning approaches that center dialogue, equity, and collaboration

\* Pitt Education faculty members

## From the Classroom to the Draft Combine

**I**nternships are a hallmark of the academic programs in health and physical activity at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. Jessica Godoy (MS '21) is now a full-time athletic trainer for Bentworth School District in Bentleyville, Pennsylvania. While earning her degree in health and physical activity programming and promotion at Pitt, she completed an internship with Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh. Her responses from a recent interview have been edited for length and clarity.

### **What drew you to the field of athletic training?**

I wanted to be in a field that involved athletics, and this career path provided me [with] the opportunity to do just that. I was intrigued to learn about the human body and found it rewarding to be part of someone's return to play. Not only am I able to help student-athletes get back on their feet, but my skill set allows me to work with all kinds of populations.

### **What was your internship like at Allegheny Health Network (AHN)?**

As an intern on AHN's strength and conditioning team, going into work was the highlight of my day! I had the privilege of celebrating each client's success in their everyday progress with their program. It was an amazing experience that I am beyond grateful for.

### **What was the most memorable experience from your internship?**

I attended Major League Baseball [MLB] Draft Combine events at PNC Park in Pittsburgh and Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia. It was a life-changing experience. I was able to network with others, apply my skills, lead stations, and do what I love.

### **What other responsibilities did you have at the MLB Draft Combine events?**

Tim Maxey, the joint strength and conditioning coordinator for MLB and MLBPA [Major League Baseball Players Association], and my supervisor, Frank Velasquez Jr., [AHN's director of sports performance], coordinated the movement, motor control, and range of motion portion of the combine's athlete assessments. I assisted with setup and breakdown of the stations, made sure assessment results were documented properly, and directed athletes to their next station.

### **How did your Pitt education prepare you to succeed professionally?**

Pitt's program was invaluable in my athletic training career. It definitely provided me with the knowledge and skills to become a better health care professional. One of my biggest takeaways was how to develop physical activity programs for specific populations in different communities.

### **What's a fun fact about yourself that people don't know?**

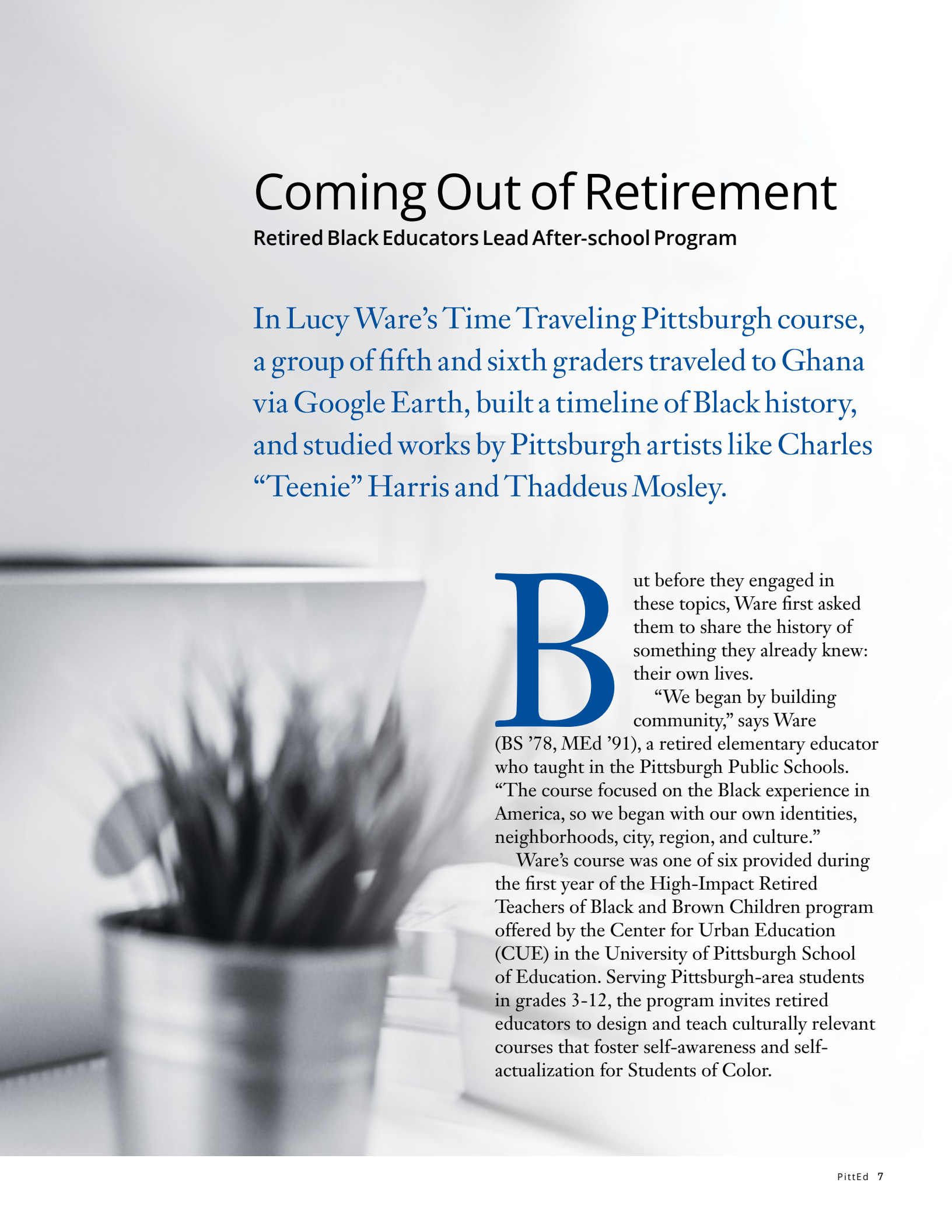
I jumped out of a plane from 13,500 feet up in the air. Skydiving was one of the best experiences of my life!











# Coming Out of Retirement

Retired Black Educators Lead After-school Program

In Lucy Ware's Time Traveling Pittsburgh course, a group of fifth and sixth graders traveled to Ghana via Google Earth, built a timeline of Black history, and studied works by Pittsburgh artists like Charles "Teenie" Harris and Thaddeus Mosley.

**B**ut before they engaged in these topics, Ware first asked them to share the history of something they already knew: their own lives.

"We began by building community," says Ware (BS '78, MEd '91), a retired elementary educator who taught in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. "The course focused on the Black experience in America, so we began with our own identities, neighborhoods, city, region, and culture."

Ware's course was one of six provided during the first year of the High-Impact Retired Teachers of Black and Brown Children program offered by the Center for Urban Education (CUE) in the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. Serving Pittsburgh-area students in grades 3-12, the program invites retired educators to design and teach culturally relevant courses that foster self-awareness and self-actualization for Students of Color.

While meeting over Zoom due to the pandemic, Ware's students wrote poems about their identities, created timelines of their lives, interviewed family members, and shared photos and sound clips of their neighborhoods. Through these assignments, they not only learned about themselves but also discovered the importance of telling their own stories and preserving history.

"It's important for me to engage young writers in culturally relevant content that bridges the personal with universal themes," says Ware.

The first iteration of the program took place from January to May 2021 and was funded by an \$87,500 grant from The Grable Foundation. CUE plans to host another term of the program in fall 2022, with 10 courses taught by retired educators.

"We have this entire population of the workforce that has a track record of being very effective in the classroom. We wanted to bring that back into the lives of students," says Cassandra Brentley, former director of special projects for CUE and program manager of the High-Impact Retired Teachers program.

"Although they may be professionally retired, these educators are engaged in their communities, bring deep knowledge and experience, and still wish to channel their enthusiasm for teaching," says T. Elon Dancy II, executive director of CUE and Helen S. Faison Endowed Chair at Pitt



Lucy Ware

Education. "Without the constraints of traditional school structures, they have been free to study Black knowledge traditions with us, to collaboratively create curriculum, and to teach for collectivism and self-determination."

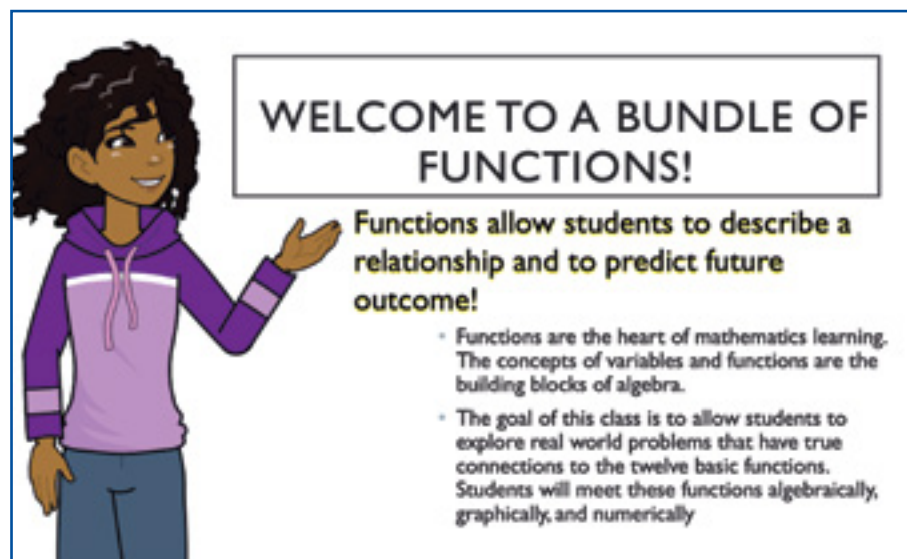
## Using Math to Investigate Social Justice Issues

The six teachers in the CUE program were free to design learning experiences they deemed relevant for students. Course titles included The Creative Exploration of That Caribbean Vibe Hiding in You and in Your Phone and Enhancing Critical Thinking through Culturally Responsive Literature and Art.

"The teachers shared stories about the challenges they experienced working in institutions that didn't always value them," says Brentley. "They couldn't be unapologetically working with their Black students and building up their racial identity because they were stuck to a very rigid curriculum."



T. Elon Dancy II



A slide from the first session of A Bundle of Functions, a high school course taught by Dorothy Coates

Dorothy Coates (MEd '02), who taught at Pittsburgh Allderdice High School for 33 years, designed a course called A Bundle of Functions that allowed high school students to explore real-world problems through math.

"Functions are the heart of mathematics learning and are the building blocks of algebra," says Coates. "The course was based around 12 basic functions that connected my students to real situations and captured their attention about societal events."

Coates taught her students how to use a graphing calculator, a device many of them hadn't used before.

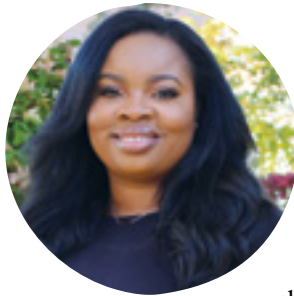
"In a lot of cases, our Black and Brown students are not shown or given the technology needed to develop a true understanding of the problem," says Coates. "It felt great when one of my students stated that the best part of her day was to be able to see an actual graph for the first time. I knew then that I had made a difference in her education."

Students in her mathematics course also discussed racial disparities and learned about the many significant contributions made by





Google Earth image of Elmina Castle in Ghana, which students toured virtually in Lucy Ware's Time Traveling Pittsburgh course



Cassandra Brentley

Black scientists and inventors. This was important to Coates, as science and math textbooks often don't include Black pioneers' contributions to these fields.

"I wanted to bring my own experience, creativity, and personal interest into the learning environment of Black and Brown students," Coates says. "In many cases, these students do not see a representation of themselves in professional positions, so it was important for me to represent."

## Empowering Students with Culturally Relevant Lessons

While the CUE program was proposed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift by schools to online learning increased the demand for programs nurturing students' social and emotional well-being.

"The challenges we see Black and Brown children in Pittsburgh and across the country experiencing were magnified by the pandemic, but they existed long before the pandemic began," says Brentley.

Asking students who had been learning online all day to get back on Zoom after school wasn't an easy task, but Brentley says that the program's small class sizes (just 10 students

per course) provided space for students to feel heard and seen.

"The majority of the students we served learned from home that school year," she says. "Being able to personalize a course that was fun yet addressed some of the needs we knew of that weren't being met in school was really important."

In addition to the course subjects—which ranged from math and science to literature and music—the themes of identity, self-expression, and empowerment were emphasized across the board.

"It was important to make the students feel part of the learning process," says Brentley. "The goal was to make a collaborative learning space where students contributed their

ideas and knowledge. That's often not the case when they're in school."

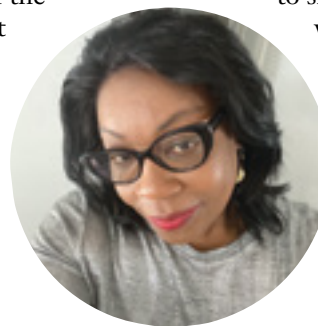
"I hope the youths who join us cocreate their learning experience with our partner teachers and fellow youths," says Dancy. "I also hope they learn that the true purposes of knowledge are critical thinking and collective struggle toward freedom and that they will share this principle with others."

Ware believes that the goals of the program align with her teaching philosophy. By inviting her students to share their personal histories while learning about Black history, she wanted to provide an enriching experience that inspired change in students' self-perception.

"My career has centered around championing the educational and social needs of diverse learners," says Ware.

"I am aware of the impact of providing an emotionally safe environment to grow a community of learners that fosters creativity.

"I believe the children experienced joy in learning," she adds. ■



Dorothy Coates

# ANSWERING THE CALL

## A New Pathway to Teaching

Written by Greg Latshaw

**B**eginning in fall 2023, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education will offer a new bachelor's degree teacher education program that will provide an undergraduate pathway to teacher certification. The program is expected to expand access to a new generation of teachers who feel called to improve the lives of young people, families, and communities. It arrives at a critical juncture for the teaching profession. Locally, statewide, and across the country, there is a growing shortage of teachers, and the scarcity of Teachers of Color is especially severe. Amid this backdrop, good teachers are needed more than ever—and Pitt Education is poised to train them.





**W**hen Javon Key, age 19, was growing up in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, he considered his public school to be his home away from home. Key recalls, “My teachers helped me go through all kinds of different things in my life.”

In school, he had a knack for a subject that some classmates enjoyed as much as having their face break out in pimples before prom night. “I found that I liked math,” says Key. “I may not be a great reader or writer, but I can learn math. A lot of students don’t like math. You always have to have a good math teacher to help you learn it.”

Key wants to be that kind of teacher for his future students. Now a sophomore at the University of Pittsburgh, he plans to pursue teacher certification in mathematics by enrolling in the new Bachelor of Science in teacher education program at the School of Education.

Launching in fall 2023, the four-year program will provide students like Key with an undergraduate pathway to earn a Level I instructional certificate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Currently, Pitt Education offers teacher certification tracks through its highly regarded graduate-level programs, but those programs can be a barrier to students like Key because an undergraduate degree is required as a prerequisite.

“This new program is going to save a lot of students money and is going to really help,” says Key.

Pitt’s new undergraduate teaching program arrives at a pivotal moment. Researchers, educators, and advocates for education say that there is a teacher shortage nationwide and across Pennsylvania, one that has worsened during the pandemic. The shortage hits hardest in specific subjects and in rural and urban locations.

Additionally, there are few Teachers of Color statewide.

Pitt’s new undergraduate teaching program arrives at a pivotal moment. Researchers, educators, and advocates for education say that **there is a teacher shortage nationwide and across Pennsylvania**, one that has worsened during the pandemic. The shortage hits hardest in specific subjects and in rural and urban locations.

Pennsylvania ranks among the states with the lowest level of educator diversity, with Teachers of Color making up only 6% of the statewide workforce despite Students of Color constituting almost 36% of the student population, according to a 2020 report from the Philadelphia-based education policy nonprofit Research for Action.

The report, which reviewed data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education from 2013 to 2020, found that the state’s racial disparity among teachers and students is more than twice the national average. Furthermore, male-identified Teachers of Color made up just 1.5% of the teaching workforce in Pennsylvania.

Pitt Education’s new BS in teacher education program, with its dual focus on culturally responsive pedagogy and career-focused teaching experiences, aims to change that.

## Restoring the Undergraduate Legacy

**In the works for years**, the new program became a reality thanks to the efforts of Valerie Kinloch, Renée and Richard Goldman Dean and professor at Pitt Education, and the school’s Reimagining Teacher Education Committee.

“Our new undergraduate teacher education program will build on and complement the excellent teacher

## Program Snapshot BS in Teacher Education

- Begins in **fall 2023**
- **Four-year program** with a minimum of 120 academic credits
- Students begin in Pitt Education in their **junior year**
- **Secondary education tracks** (grades 7-12) in English, mathematics, science, and social studies; preK-12 tracks in special education and world and heritage languages
- Minimum of **two teaching placements required**
- Focused on **equitable teaching practices** and culturally responsive pedagogy

education programs that we currently offer and will continue to offer at the graduate level,” says Kinloch. “I am very hopeful for our ongoing commitment to preparing a new generation of teachers who will embody the mission-vision of our school, which, among other things, calls on us to dream, to teach, and to lead with dignity and integrity. What an exciting time this is for Pitt Education!”





Pitt student Javon Key at his high school alma mater

**“The fact that we are situated in an urban setting gives opportunities for placements in urban, suburban and semirural settings.”**

— Michelle Sobolak, *director of teacher and professional education and associate professor of practice at Pitt Education*

The program restores the school’s link to undergraduate-focused teacher certification. The school previously offered an undergraduate program, but it was discontinued in the 1980s.

Carol O’Donnell (BS ’83) is among the many Pitt alumni excited to see the undergraduate program return to their alma mater. Forty years ago, while earning her degree in K-8 education, she completed her student teaching at Pitt’s Fanny Edel Falk Laboratory School. Today she is director of the Smithsonian Science Education Center in Washington, D.C.

“I’m convinced that the reason I became so passionate about science education was because I had a

chance to work at the Falk School,” says O’Donnell. “I remember that experience like it was yesterday. I learned everything there—inquiry-based science, engaging students in practices of science, field-based learning experiences—and I thought the program was very innovative and ahead of its time.”

Pitt’s new BS in teacher education program continues that spirit of innovation. Fully aligned with Pennsylvania Department of Education certification areas, the degree program offers two tracks for specialization. Students can pursue certification for grades 7-12 in English, math, science, or social studies or certification for grades preK-12 in either special education or world and heritage languages.

“Students will be at Pitt for four years and enter our program with two years of experience in the [Kenneth P.] Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. In their two years in the School of Education, we will be able to go in depth on issues of educational freedom, justice, and pedagogy and provide structured and mentored experiences in schools,” says Michelle Sobolak, director of teacher and professional education and associate professor of practice at Pitt Education. “The other exciting aspects are that Pitt is a research university where educational research is routinely conducted, we have a strong partnership with the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, and our new program will focus on educational equity and justice.”

Meanwhile, students interested in becoming certified to teach in elementary schools can enroll in Pitt Education's Combined Accelerated Studies in Education program (for undergraduates) or Primary Plus program (for master's students).

Prior to graduating, BS teacher education program students will complete two teaching placements. While working with a mentor teacher, they will be exposed to different types of curricula, workplace settings, and student populations to strengthen their work as future teachers.

"The fact that we are situated in an urban setting gives opportunities for placements in urban, suburban and semirural settings," says Sobolak.

## New Teachers in High Demand

In the past, Pitt's newly certified teachers frequently had to leave the Pittsburgh area or the state altogether to find a job. That was because the supply of teachers far outpaced the number of positions. That is no longer the case. New teachers have more job opportunities locally.

"Gone are the days in Pennsylvania when we were an exporter of teachers," says Chris Lilienthal, a spokesperson for the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

As a result, new teachers are competing with fewer applicants when interviewing for teaching vacancies.

"We used to get hundreds of applications for every teaching job other than for a specialty science job, but that's just not the case anymore. We get far fewer applications," says Brian J. White Jr. (MEd '00, EdD '06), superintendent of the Butler Area School District.

It's a similar situation at the Elizabeth Forward School District in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, says Superintendent Todd Keruskin (EdD '05). "I've been an administrator for 21 years. I have never seen anything



"The question is, how do we diversify the workforce and then retain those teachers we get into the profession? The answer is that it's a both/and situation. **We need more Educators of Color, and we also need more white educators who are culturally responsive.**"

—Donna-Marie Cole-Malott,  
*codirector of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium*

like what I've seen in the last two or three years. Currently, the demand we have in trying to find teachers ... everybody is experiencing it," he says.

Teaching positions in special education, mathematics, the physical sciences, and world and heritage languages are the most difficult to fill, says White. The Butler Area School District has filed for emergency certifications to fill some of these positions.

This trend is no surprise to Sheila Conway, an associate professor of practice at Pitt Education who teaches special education in the teacher certification programs at the school.

"Job prospects in certain areas, especially special education, are tremendous. There are job openings nationwide," says Conway.

While the most pressing need for school districts nationwide is for special educators, newly certified teachers across all areas are entering a strong job market with high demand for new graduates.

"Now is a fantastic time to become a teacher because ... we really need teachers and there are a lot of opportunities," says Lilienthal.

He says that students have more job opportunities because fewer teachers are entering the workforce and established teachers are retiring or leaving the profession. Statewide, there was a 63% decline in Instructional I certificates issued to new teachers in Pennsylvania from 2010 to 2021, according to the Pennsylvania Department of



## Elevating Teacher Salaries

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf has proposed raising the minimum salary of teachers to \$45,000 per year. **By a law established in the 1980s, teachers' minimum base pay is \$18,500. Most districts pay well beyond that, and in Pennsylvania, the highest salaries are frequently offered in suburban districts outside metropolitan areas.**

Top five school districts for starting teacher salaries in the Pittsburgh metro area:

1. Franklin Regional: \$59,500
2. Northgate: \$54,292
3. Fox Chapel Area: \$53,848
4. Kiski Area: \$53,900
5. Greensburg Salem: \$53,237

**Source:** Pennsylvania State Education Association database "Full Salary Table"

Education. However, last year, the numbers increased by 11%.

While there are multiple factors causing this decline, funding cuts to education, at both the K-12 and higher education level, have had a "chilling effect" on talented young people wanting to enter the profession, says Tanya I. Garcia, deputy secretary and commissioner of the state's Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education.

"The shortage is here, and it's been here since before the pandemic," says Garcia.

## A Shortage of Educators of Color

**One aim of Pitt's BS in teacher education program** is to encourage more Black, Latinx, and other Students of Color to enter the teaching profession, says Kinloch.

It is imperative that colleges and universities, as gateways to the profession, help to advance the

systemic changes needed to address the absence of Educators of Color in the Pittsburgh region and statewide, notes Donna-Marie Cole-Malott, codirector of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium and an assistant professor of professional and secondary education at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania.

"The question is, how do we diversify the workforce and then retain those teachers we get into the profession?" says Cole-Malott. "The answer is that it's a both/and situation. We need more Educators of Color, and we also need more white educators who are culturally responsive."

The topic has personal meaning to Cole-Malott. She is the mother of two Black children who attend a predominantly white school district. "It's important for my children to see educators who look like them," she says. "The data supports the fact that Students of Color and white students do well academically and thrive when they have a Teacher of Color. When they don't get to see any for the entirety of their schooling experience, it's a missed opportunity, and it has implications for their long- and short-term success in school."

Unfortunately, many Students of Color in Pennsylvania don't have the opportunity to learn from teachers who look like them. The 2020 report from Research for Action found that in Allegheny County, which encompasses the Pittsburgh metro area, 42% of schools had zero Teachers of Color in the 2019-20 school year. Worse, 32% of schools in the county had zero Teachers of Color over a seven-year period.

"The problems are not unique to Pittsburgh," says David Lapp, director of policy research at Research for Action. "That period of time saw a significant decline in almost every city in the number of Black teachers. Philadelphia also saw a significant decline. Studies have shown that

school closures have fallen more heavily on Students of Color."

Mary Eddins, a policy associate at Research for Action, says that the analogy of windows and mirrors is helpful to demonstrate why all students benefit from having teachers from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds: "Students should feel like there are individuals in school they can see themselves in [i.e., mirrors] and individuals who are different from them [i.e., windows] to grow their perspective and understanding of the world."

## Reimagining the Teaching Profession

**Graduates of Pitt's new BS in teacher education program** will enter the workforce ready to center equity, justice, and inclusion into their work as teachers.

To complement their course work on culturally responsive pedagogy, students can participate in voluntary experiences designed to deepen their understanding. These include the following:

- **The annual Freedom and Justice Gathering** for teaching candidates to network with community educators and give presentations on their socially conscious work

## Scarcity of Teachers of Color

**Teachers of Color made up just 6% of the teacher workforce in Pennsylvania in 2019-20**, while Students of Color made up nearly 36% of all students in the state. 50% of Pennsylvania's public schools employed only white teachers in 2019-20.

Approximately **28% of Pennsylvania's school districts had zero teachers of color over the last seven years (2013-20)**.

**Source:** Research for Action, "Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania from 2013-14 to 2019-20"



teacher education program from programs at many other universities.

“There’s a lot happening in the School of Education right now that feels like it’s complementing the work,” says Rainey. “It starts to be in the air that we all breathe.

“We need young teachers who are committed to both equitable instruction and school change,” she adds.

“We picture our program

creating a community of school-based activists who will work with students and other stakeholders to transform schools from within.”

## Answering the Call to Help Others

While teachers today face many challenges, the profession provides a rewarding sense of fulfillment that other jobs don’t, says Lilienthal of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

“I never met a teacher who didn’t find their job rewarding in that way,” he says. “When I’ve met teachers who are unhappy, it’s always because of lack of support. But working with the students, that’s everything. That is what really drives these folks to get up every morning.”

Butler’s White says that teaching is a profession that feels more like a calling than a 9-5 job: “Teaching is a vocation for people who are called to help others and shape the world of tomorrow.”

Elizabeth Forward’s Keruskin adds that teachers are needed to restore a sense of normalcy in the lives of students whose learning continues to be disrupted by the pandemic. “Our kids need us more than ever. Now is a great time to give back to the community and our kids,” he says.

## Reaching Future Black Educators

To address the shortage of Black teachers in Pittsburgh-area schools, Pitt Education **Dean Valerie Kinloch created a new college preparatory academy for rising high school seniors that encourages education as a career path.** Called Genius, Joy, and Love: A Focus on Black Students, the inaugural academy was held over four weeks in July and August 2022. A group of students from the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) completed a mini college experience on Pitt’s campus that emphasized literacy instruction, STEAM education, and more. **The summer academy was funded by a \$250,000 gift from Debra Kline Demchak and William S. Demchak,** who also provided a \$1 million gift for The Pittsburgh Promise’s Advancing Educators of Color scholarship. The scholarship, which seeks to add 35 Black educators to the district over seven years, will fully cover the cost of college for selected students from PPS who train to be educators, pursue their teaching certificate, and teach in PPS for at least five years after graduation.

Key may be part of the new generation of teachers to answer that calling. At Pitt, Key has found another home away from home, and he’s looking forward to enrolling in the new BS in teacher education program.

“I’m planning to teach high school math and to be there for my students like my teachers were for me.” ■

- **One-credit elective freedom seminars** on a variety of topics about how education can advance freedom, justice, and liberation
- **Multigenerational microcollectives** putting undergraduate teaching students in a study group with high school students, master’s students, and an experienced in-service teacher as part of the Pitt Education research project titled Practices of Freedom: A Model for Transformative Teaching and Teacher Education

T. Elon Dancy II, Helen S. Faison Endowed Chair in Urban Education and executive director of the Center for Urban Education at Pitt Education, is coprincipal investigator of the Practices of Freedom Project.

“The program will immerse undergraduate teacher education students in the study of Black knowledge traditions through course work, reading groups, and symposia across the School of Education,” says Dancy. “The program brings together youths, preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and community resident educators to disrupt one-to-one supervisory models and invite frequently excluded knowledge communities.”

Emily Rainey, assistant professor at Pitt Education, says that its overriding focus on equity and justice separates Pitt Education’s preservice





# Redefining School Discipline

University of Pittsburgh School of Education Professor Ming-Te Wang is coleading a \$4 million project with the U.S. Department of Education to create a national model for restorative practices in America's public schools.

**B**efore joining the faculty at Pitt Education, Wang worked as a teacher at a Taiwanese middle school located on a reservation for Indigenous peoples.

“Working with this school and the students was really great, but it presented many challenges,” Wang recalls.

Many of his students experienced racial discrimination and had turbulent home lives due to the effects of alcoholism and poverty. Making matters worse, those who acted out in school received harsh corporal punishments. While some students responded by dropping out of school, others pressed on and eventually earned a college degree.

“It got me thinking: What made such a huge difference between my engaged and unengaged students, and what can the school do so that everybody not only survives but also thrives?” says Wang.

For decades, Wang has striven to answer these questions through his study of educational and health disparities among historically marginalized youths. In particular, he has observed how American public schools—much like his former middle school in Taiwan—often handle school discipline in the wrong way. Studies published by Wang and others show that American schools tend more often to discipline students with punitive or exclusionary punishments. This is especially true among Students of Color, who receive this treatment more frequently than their white classmates.

“We started by looking at current discipline practices and policies to see if they are helping misbehaving students to behave well

Wang and others show that American schools tend more often to discipline students with punitive or exclusionary punishments. **This is especially true among Students of Color, who receive this treatment more frequently than their white classmates.**

and other well-behaved students [to] perform well,” says Wang. “We found that, actually, it’s the opposite.”

### Changing the Conversation

**A**long with James Huguley, associate professor and associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, Wang is helping schools to rethink student discipline.

He wants schools to instead use restorative practices to correct students’ misbehavior and focus on building relationships between teachers and students.

At the core of their efforts is the Just Discipline Project at the University’s

Center on Race and Social Problems. Wang and Huguley are the project’s coprincipal investigators.

The Just Discipline Project is designed to help schools reduce the need for exclusionary discipline and build a positive relational climate in schools. Forms of exclusionary punishment include removing a student from a classroom and doling out suspensions and expulsions. Research shows that the overuse of such practices contributes

to the United States’ so-called school-to-prison pipeline.

From 2017 to 2019, Wang and Huguley led a team working on the project with a middle school in the Pittsburgh-area Woodland Hills School District. The district had been struggling with high suspension rates. According to a report on their findings, after restorative practices were implemented, there was a 22% decrease in student suspensions, a 30% decrease in student referrals, and a 19% improvement in student perceptions of safety. Furthermore, students experienced academic gains in math, language arts, and science.

“These findings send a powerful message to school leaders,” says Wang. “Systemic changes are needed. We need to replace current policy and practice with something more developmentally and culturally responsive.”

### The Start of a National Model

**I**n December 2021, Wang and Huguley received a \$4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand the Just Discipline Project model to other middle schools. The new project, School Just Discipline Project: Reducing Racial Achievement and Discipline Disparities and Promoting Positive School Climate, will run through December 2025.



Ming-Te Wang



James Huguley





“Our goal is to reduce schools’ and teachers’ use of punitive or exclusionary disciplinary practices as well as [to] establish inclusive and engaging school climate,” says Wang. “We want to see if we can reduce the racial disparities in school discipline. We also want to enhance students’ and teachers’ cultural and socio-emotional competencies.”

Throughout the project, Wang and Huguley plan to expand the Just Discipline model to between 30 and 40 middle schools primarily serving Students of Color from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in the greater Pittsburgh and Cleveland, Ohio, areas. The schools will be from a mix of urban, suburban, and semirural districts. Wang and Huguley will hire more than a dozen restorative practice coordinators, who will provide training for staff and offer resources for students in the schools. Among the restorative measures to be used are daily healing

In December 2021, Wang and Huguley received a **\$4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education** to expand the Just Discipline Project model to other middle schools.

circles, training for student leaders to become mediators, and bias awareness training.

“Relationship building is the foundation for wonderful things to happen,” says Wang. “If you want a student to learn, you need to have a good relationship with them. Both the adults and the students need the socio-emotional skills for when conflict arises.”

Wang says that their model is different from other school intervention programs in that

it doesn’t ask teachers to take on unreasonable additional responsibilities. They will be supported by the restorative practice coordinators rather than asked to do it all.

While the work has only just begun, Wang sees potential for schools to use it broadly.

“We really want this model to be disseminated nationwide, not just in Pittsburgh and Cleveland,” he says. ■

### Adam Alvarez

(PhD '18) received the 2021 American Educational Research Association Review of Research Award for his article, "Seeing Race in the Research on Youth Trauma and Education: A Critical Review."



### Kenneth De Haan

(EdD '20) was promoted to director of the Master of Arts program in sign language education at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. The program is the largest graduate program at the university.



### Stephanie Fiely

(MEd '05, EdD '20) is assistant executive director of the Education and Training Hub at the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville (UPT). In this role, she oversees the facilities, operations, auxiliary services, and various other aspects within the hub administration, including the new Manufacturing Assistance Center at UPT, which supports high-paying jobs in manufacturing and has resulted in a 100% job placement rate for its graduates.



### Bill Fox

(EdD '20) was appointed vice president for student affairs and dean of students at Antioch College, a small liberal arts college located in Yellow Springs, Ohio.



### Richard M. Goldman

(MEd '66, PhD '70) cofounded an online high school named Smart Horizons Career Online High School, which has partnered with Amazon to provide the company's global workforce with a pathway to a high school diploma.



### TaMisha Greathouse

(MAT '08) was named director of campus activities at the University of Southern California. In this role, she will oversee campus programming for more than 49,000 students and lead the team that supports student organizations campuswide.

### Valerie Howard

(EdD '07) was named dean of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing.



### Dawna Jones

(MEd '09) was named director of Duke University's Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture. She will oversee the center's efforts to foster a safe space that supports the diverse needs of Black-identified people at Duke.



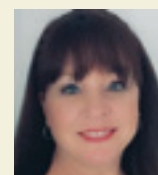
### Lynnea Lombardi

(MEd '21) received a 2021 award from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program to teach conversational English to students in grades 7-12 in South Korea.



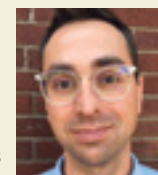
### Jennifer Kohart Marchessault

(MEd '00) was named the Virginia State Literacy Association 2022 Ofie T. Rubin Reading Teacher of the Year.



### Chris Olshefski

(PhD '21) received the 2022 Dissertation of the Year Award from the American Educational Research Association's Religion and Education Special Interest Group. His dissertation was titled "Functions of Religious Literacy in Literary Discussions of National Board-certified English Teachers."



### Michael Rizzi

(EdD '17), assistant dean and director of student services at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, is author of the new book "Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History." The book traces the development of American higher education through the collective eyes of Georgetown University, Boston College, Fordham University, and other Jesuit institutions.



### Janet Sardon

(MEd '99, EdD '03) was named superintendent of the West Jefferson Hills School District in Jefferson Hills, Pennsylvania.



### Alydia R. Thomas

(EdD '18), associate director of residence life for student development and programming at Duquesne University, was named a 2021 40 Under 40 honoree by Pittsburgh Magazine and PUMP.

### Katie "KT" Todd

(EdD '22) was named director of learning and research at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.



## In Memoriam

### Emmett C. Burns Jr.

(PhD '74), the first African American elected to statewide office representing Baltimore County, Maryland, died on March 17, 2022. He also was the founding pastor at Rising Sun First Baptist Church.

### Sarah "Betty" Glick,

a steward for the Sherry Berkowitz Memorial Award Fund in Pitt Education, which was named after her late niece Sherry, who died as a student at Pitt Education, passed away on April 22, 2022, at the age of 96.

### Marcia M. Gumberg

(BUN '51) died on Jan. 13, 2022, at the age of 91. She was the mother of three sons, including Ira Gumberg, a former member of the University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees.

### Verna Hart,

an emeritus faculty member at Pitt Education, died on Nov. 3, 2021, at the age of 93. She was part of the special education faculty and retired in 1992.

### Carol Hughes,

the wife of Pitt Education faculty member Sean Hughes, died on June 12, 2021.

### Brian R. McFeeley

(MEd '00), former principal of Mt. Lebanon High School near Pittsburgh, died on March 4, 2022, at the age of 49.

### Gwenlynn B. Pike

(BS '64), former director of the Child Find/Early Childhood Education program in the Albuquerque Public Schools in New Mexico, died on Sept. 9, 2021, at the age of 79.

### Louis Pingel

died on Nov. 15, 2021, at the age of 83. An emeritus faculty member, he worked for more than 40 years as a graduate professor of statistics and associate dean.

## Maryland Teacher of the Year

**B**rianna Ross' personal role model for being an excellent teacher was her kindergarten teacher, Miss Caruthers.

"I was the only Black girl in my class, and she was one of the only Black teachers I ever had," recalls Ross (BS '14, MEd '15), who grew up near Philadelphia. "I don't remember what I learned; I just remember how I felt in her classroom. I remember feeling loved. And I remember that she set very high expectations for us in kindergarten."

Ross applies a similar teaching philosophy in her classroom. She teaches sixth-grade social studies and serves as the equity liaison at Deer Park Middle Magnet School in the Baltimore County Public Schools in Maryland. Additionally, she launched a summer transition program to help incoming students thrive in middle school.

Last October, Ross received the state's highest honor for teachers when she was named the Maryland 2021-22 Teacher of the Year. She was selected from a group of 24 finalists.

Ross says that teaching was challenging during the pandemic and following the murder of George Floyd. She used the moment as an opportunity to understand and empathetically respond to the experiences of her students, the majority of whom are Black or Latinx.

"I believe that teaching is the profession to restore humanity," says Ross. "Teaching history gives us a great place to restore the sense of agency in our kids and to help them advocate for change in their lives."

Ross is a graduate of the Combined Accelerated Studies in Education program at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. She is now earning her doctorate in urban educational leadership at Morgan State University.

"I want my kids to know they are loved. Our work should be grounded in love 100% of the time," says Ross.

It's an important lesson she learned in kindergarten.



## Share Your News

Have you changed jobs or received a promotion? Let us know. Email us at [soenews@pitt.edu](mailto:soenews@pitt.edu). In addition to printing updates in the magazine, we share alumni news on the School of Education social media channels and through articles on the school website at [education.pitt.edu/news](http://education.pitt.edu/news).

To update your alumni information, please contact Mike Haas, director of development and alumni affairs at Pitt Education, at [mbh26@pitt.edu](mailto:mbh26@pitt.edu).



## Making History: Q&A with Jill Sarada

**O**n July 1, 2022, Jill Sarada (MAT '94) became director of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education's Fanny Edel Falk Laboratory School and the first woman director in the 91-year history of the school. Founded in 1931, Falk is an independent K-8 laboratory school located on Pitt's campus.

It is a special time for Sarada, who has spent her entire career at Falk, beginning as a student teaching intern years ago. Her responses from a recent interview have been edited for length and clarity.

### **What first inspired you to pursue a career in education?**

[What first inspired me were the] tutoring experiences that I had when I was younger. One was with my sister, who was in high school and struggling with math. She would get frustrated when I tutored her because I wouldn't just give her the answers; instead, I wanted her to understand the answers. After acing a math test, she called me to say that she saw value in the way I was

helping her. The experience brought meaning to my life in ways I hadn't experienced before.

### **What's your favorite thing about Falk School that sets it apart from other schools?**

To describe it visually, it's these flashes and interactions happening all the time between children and adults in the building. These moments of relationship building happen in a way that is warm, welcoming, and nurturing. That creates a joy in the building for all who enter it, and that joy is electric.

### **What does it mean to you to be the first woman director in the history of the school?**

I want to not only be known as the first woman director, I want to be known for the work I do as the first woman director. I want to make a significant impact on what laboratory schools can do and what Falk can do at the University. I want to show the young girls at Falk that they can break the glass ceiling—that they "belong in all places where

decisions are being made," to quote Ruth Bader Ginsburg. With hard work and passion, they can achieve anything they put their minds to.

### **As you start your role as director, what are you most looking forward to doing?**

I want to bring a real focus to the research aspect of a laboratory school. A research focus will further nurture the school's culture of lifelong learning and engage with every member of our community. I want everyone in our community to feel that love of learning.

### **If you could have any superpower, what would it be?**

Batman has always been my favorite superhero because he doesn't have a superpower. He's just intelligent and passionate about helping other people. I wonder what we as humans can do with the powers we have already—our intelligence, our care, our passion. There's nothing else I'd want more than to use what I already have.

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS ONE BOOK AT A TIME

### Spotlight on Mission-driven Endowments

Written by Kaitlyn Zurcher

**W**hen Jack L. Daniel was an undergraduate student at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, he and a friend took the same classes for the first two years, not because they were pursuing the same major but so they could split the cost of textbooks.

"We couldn't pay tuition, much less purchase books," says Daniel, former vice provost for undergraduate studies and an emeritus professor at Pitt. "There were many times where we couldn't get work done because we didn't have the book."

While they found some books at the library, the pair worked out a system in which they purchased one book to share, trading off on who would get the book the night before an exam. Ultimately, Daniel completed his bachelor's degree in psychology at the Pittsburgh campus in 1963, then went on to earn his master's and PhD degrees in communication in 1966 and 1968, respectively.



That experience was a driving force for why he and his wife, Jerlean E. Daniel (PhD '75), established the Dr. Jerlean E. Daniel Book Award in 2008. This student resource fund is given annually to an undergraduate student in the Pitt School of Education's applied developmental psychology program to help them purchase textbooks.

Based on her career experience—which includes serving as chair of the Pitt applied developmental psychology program, director of the University Child Development Center, and executive director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children—Jerlean Daniel prioritizes supporting students of color as they pursue early childhood education careers.

"Oftentimes, Black people in my field have a hard time accessing college degrees," says Jerlean Daniel, associate professor emeritus at Pitt Education and member of its Board of Visitors. "When I was teaching at Pitt, I encountered many students who were taking a full course load while working part or full time. It's difficult to find time to study when you're trying to keep a roof over your head and pay your tuition."

**B**y reducing the cost of purchasing books, the Daniels hope the endowment is helping recipients to better focus on their studies.

"People often talk about the achievement gap, but if you flip that, you quickly realize that it's an opportunity gap," says Jack Daniel. "Something like the book award helps to reduce the opportunity gap and contributes to high student achievement."

"While on one hand, the book award may seem like a small amount, it's huge for a student who doesn't have many resources," says Jerlean Daniel.

"People often talk about the achievement gap, but if you flip that, you quickly realize that it's an opportunity gap. Something like the book award helps to reduce the opportunity gap and contributes to high student achievement."

—Jack Daniel

Jack (seated) and Jerlean Daniel

"It's just a great joy to be able to see someone pursue their dreams," she adds.

In addition to the Dr. Jerlean E. Daniel Book Award, Jack Daniel also has a named endowed book award that benefits Pitt students.

The Daniels encourage other alumni to consider establishing endowments to help individual students and support Pitt's commitment to diversity, equity, and justice.

"Philanthropy is an opportunity to help with immediate needs and to think strategically about the longer term and make progress with systemic issues," says Jack Daniel.

"As a society, there are far too many people for whom a college degree is out of reach," says Jerlean Daniel. "I think in order for our university to be indisputably

world class, it has got to be a diverse organization that looks more like America."

The Daniels want to do their part by helping students—one set of books at a time.

**Would you like to learn how to maximize your gift?**

Contact Michael Haas, director of development and alumni affairs, at [mbh26@pitt.edu](mailto:mbh26@pitt.edu).

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